



The Planning Network

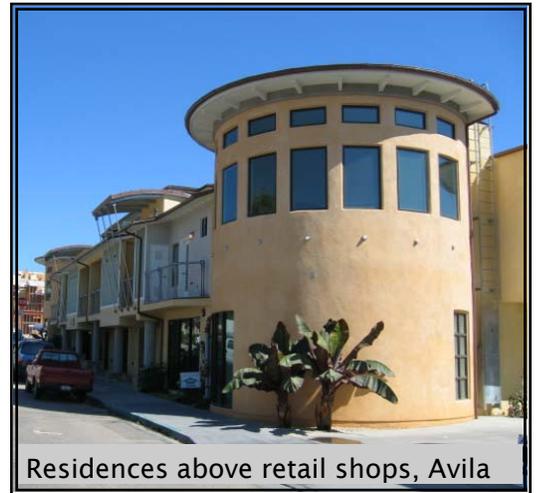
Smart Growth:

What is it and what is the County doing to encourage it?

Inside this issue:

Meet the Featured Staff Member	2
Smart Growth Continued	3
RV Round Up	4
Inspection Tips	5
Design Competition	5
Oak Trees	6
Certificates of Compliance	7
Upcoming Events	8

“Smart growth is the way to grow the economy, preserve the environment and have healthy communities without sacrificing the quality of life for future generations. Smart growth is the planning side of sustainable development.” Christine Todd Whitman, Chief Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, former Governor of New Jersey.



Residences above retail shops, Avila

There is a growing call for new tools to help deal with the challenges confronting us as a region.

We face a serious shortage of affordable workforce housing, our economic strength is threatened, our major roadways are becoming more congested, and our open space and natural resources are threatened by continued sprawl into rural areas. On June 7, 2005, the Board of Supervisors endorsed the “Guiding Principles of Smart Growth”. The Board endorsed these principles “with the intent of engaging in implementing actions, programs and projects to succeed in achieving the principles.”

The American Planning Association defines Smart Growth as a “collection of planning, regulatory, and development practices that use land resources more efficiently through compact building forms, infill development, and moderation in street and parking standards.” One of its purposes is to reduce the outward spread of urbanization, protect sensitive lands, and, in the process, create true neighborhoods with a sense of community.



Smart Growth encourages a mix of uses, such as stores, offices, residences, and schools, to be located in close proximity to each other. It also encourages a mix of housing choices so that young and old, single persons and families, and those of varying economic ability may find places to live.

Continued on Page 3

The Planning and Building Department’s Mission Statement:

Promoting the Wise Use of Land

Helping to Build Great Communities

We’re on the web!
WWW.SLOPLANNING.ORG

Meet the Staff—Peter Byrne

Every quarter, a different staff member will be featured.



After flunking out of aerospace engineering at UCSB (okay, dropping out after being relentlessly on academic probation), I switched my major to science to keep my parents happy--I forgot to mention to them that it was political science, but what the heck.

Since I had long hair, (believe it or not, and, no, there are no surviving pictures) and it was about the same time Chairman Mao towed a boat across the Yangtze River swimming with a rope in his mouth, I decided to study the Chinese language and try to pass the Foreign Service Exam. That is when I discovered that there are some really smart people out there!

After graduation, and realizing that I had no useful skills, I decided to hitchhike to Alaska and back with a friend of mine and to squeeze in a bicycle trip of the Hawaiian Islands.

Knowing that the real world was not ready for me yet, I decided to go back to work in Yosemite National Park, where I had been working during summers between school. I ended up working and living there for seven years, four of which I rode horses for the Park Service and during which I saw most of the backcountry of Yosemite via horseback. (This was a good thing since I then realized that carrying around a heavy backpack and eating freeze-dried shrimp was not anywhere near as appealing as loading a pack mule with beer and steaks and riding around the mountains.)

During that time, several coworkers of mine and I were hired to work for the National Science Foundation in Antarctica for the U.S. Antarctic Research Program. I was the Assistant Manager for the Berg Field Center and ran the dive locker for ice diving scientists from Scripps Institute of Oceanography. I was also given the task of caring for and transporting scientists and their equipment to different research stations including Cape Crozier, the world's southern-most Emperor Penguin rookery.

Not long after that, my brother talked me into attending a commercial diving school in Santa Barbara. From there, I went to work for SubSea International, diving around oil platforms, and lived in Northern Scotland for two years. Some of these diving jobs took me to Norway, Denmark, and even to New Zealand for three years. Saturation diving is a world of its own, where you live in steel cylinders under pressure for 30 days at a time. There is some interesting marine life at 500 feet, and the oil platforms make great marine life habitats.

After seven years of diving and a new baby, I decided to build my own house and ended up with a two-story New England Saltbox. Luckily, I found an experienced older carpenter to work with me 'cause I sure the heck didn't know what I was doing.

After deciding to bail out of diving, I obtained my contractor's license and framed houses for several years, built a spec house, and was then hired on for the San Luis Obispo County Planning and Building Department. I spent eight years as an inspector, and moved on into plan review for the next nine years where one could not find a better group of people with whom to work. Finito!

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER— Ellie Porter



Ellie has taken the Records Management/Word Processing section to a new level and developed a committed team of folks who come together to solve problems that arise. There is a real “pitch in” attitude in her section. They have taken on the conversion to Granicus and made a major change in our accessibility for our clients and the community. In addition, she is growing the skills of each of the people in the section. Finally, when there is an issue that comes up with another section, Ellie takes a “what’s right for the customer” approach to the short term solution and then looks long term on how to make it better in the future.

Department Promotions



Nicole Retana
Secretary I

Mike was hired in 1987 and has worked in Long Range and Current Planning, performing a variety of assignments while occupying six different buildings and even more different desks since then. Mike's varied assignments included project manager for general plan updates, and serving as a longstanding liaison to two community advisory groups. Mike was recently promoted to Supervising Planner and oversees several planning efforts in the Community Planning section of Long Range Planning. Mike enjoys hiking in the redwoods, music, photography, and running both model and real trains.



Melissa Johnson
Permit Technician

I relocated from the Bay Area in 2003 to be closer to family. I started with Planning & Building in November 2003 as an Administrative Assistant III (temporary help). I was hired permanent in April 2005 in the Records Management section. I am very excited and looking forward to this new challenge as a Secretary I. Outside of work, my 4 year old daughter, Tatiana, keeps me on my toes!

Mike Wulkan
Supervising Planner



I started my career with the County in 2006 after being a stay-at-home mom for 4 years. I gained an excellent grasp of customer service by running two home based businesses. I love working for the County because of the flexibility to be with my family when they need me. In my spare time I enjoy scrapbooking my family's memories as well as reading a good book. You will often find me on my lunch hour with my nose in a novel.

Conservation Element Update

For latest information on the Conservation Element update, go to www.sloplanning.org

Chapters of the updated Element:

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|----------|
| Agriculture | Air Quality | Biology |
| Cultural/Historic | Energy | Minerals |
| Open Space | Soils | Water |
| Visual | | |



Contact James Caruso @ jcaruso@co.slo.ca.us

Smart Growth. . . continued

Locating these mixes of uses and housing types within walking distance of each other creates compact, diverse neighborhoods where walking, bicycling, and transit are viable transportation alternatives to driving. Smart Growth also links infrastructure and development decisions to minimize future costs.

With adoption of the Smart Growth Principles, the Board of Supervisors directed staff to engage in implementing actions, programs, and projects to succeed in achieving the principles. One of these implementing actions is a priority processing system for Smart Growth-rated projects. This system is be-

ing prepared as a pilot program by County Planning staff. It allows expedited processing of land use, land division and building permits for projects that include features attributed to Smart Growth principles. Projects are evaluated



against criteria to determine if projects qualify as Smart Growth and, therefore, for priority processing. Projects that qualify for expedited processing will not receive any less scrutiny for compliance with land use or environmental regulations.

The projects that qualify for expedited processing are those that give priority for resources and services to compact, life-enriching, healthy neighborhoods and commercial development, compared to low-density development that sprawls all over the rural areas of our county.

Written by Martha Neder

"RV Round Up" — When Good RVs Go Bad

By Art Trinidad

The second phase of the California Valley Cleanup is under way this April. The community has been very concerned with the number of abandoned trailers and mobile homes left on properties, very often without the property owner's permission, and is working with the county through their cleanup committee to get these hazards and eyesores where they belong, in a recycle heap.

Code Enforcement has contracted with a recycler to crush many of these abandoned trailers and remove them from the valley. Utilizing a block grant, project manager Tim Fielder identified properties with junk trailers on them that are visible from Soda Lake Road, Belmont Trail and Seven Mile Road, the major arteries in the valley, and contacted the property owners for permission to get rid of the trailers. Many agreed, and some didn't respond. Those who did decide to cooperate are able to resolve long-standing violations, and those who didn't will be subject to immediate fines.

When both phases of the cleanup are complete, Code Enforcement will be doing a saturation proactive code enforcement effort in the California Valley subdivision for storage violations. "Property owners and residents have been given plenty of warning and two great opportunities to get rid of cars, scrap metal and junk trailers," said Fielder. "The volunteerism and hard work of this community's residents now has to be rewarded with a strong enforcement effort to prevent this problem from reoccurring and to force those people who ignore the community standards to come into compliance."



Before



After



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

Totals from phase 2 are 1 motor home, 8 mobile homes, 9 RVs, and 3 miscellaneous wood structures. This also resulted in the removal of an additional 75 tons of trash, with 20 tons of metal being recycled.

Totals for the entire cleanup are (drum roll please) 330 vehicles crushed, 540 tons of metal recycled and 177,000 lbs of trash removed.

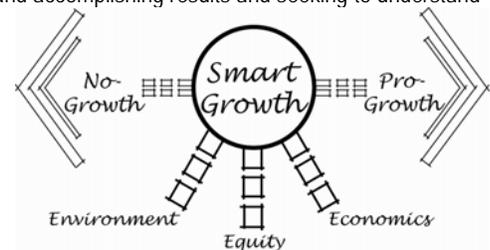
Bringing Smart Growth into the General Plan

by Jim Lopes

Smart Growth will be proposed this summer as *the* model for planning in the County when the foundation document for land use, *Framework for Planning*, introduces the principles endorsed by the Board of Supervisors in 2005. The draft will focus on selected major land use and transportation issues, such as housing, community expansion, conversion of agricultural land, and the attraction of streets for walking. We may not be calling it Smart Growth though.

Due to the labeling effect of "Smart" Growth, which implies anything else to be mentally challenged, the notion of "strategic" growth may be more related to the County's enhanced institutional values. These are oriented toward mission and accomplishing results and seeking to understand from all directions what threats and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses are associated with different policy choices.

Smart Growth was originally coined to mean balancing between competing pro- and no-growth interests, as illustrated here. The strategic approach similarly seeks to work cooperatively with interest groups to identify win-win solutions. Our interest in a sustainable environment, the social equity of all concerned, and a prosperous economy also reflects the foundations of Smart Growth.



The strategic approach of the County also seeks to translate goals into policies and then on-the-ground results. Besides integrating the endorsed Smart Growth principles with the general goals for land use planning, the *Framework for Planning* amendment will introduce implementing actions and priorities for completion. The strategic approach to Smart Growth may mean fewer injured egos, because it provides a decision process and environment that seek to recognize differences, meet the concerns of those affected and provide measurable results.

Our health, safety, environment and financial and spiritual quality of life are undergoing stresses and increasing threats partly from the broad or often very detailed effects of typical planning and development. The new/old concepts of compact, walkable neighborhoods provide solutions over the wide scale of our region to the tremendous growth foreseen in the county. We are continuing to work with the Council of Governments on regional models of typical and compact growth to present options to the public and decision-makers this year. The County's participation in the **Community 2050** process is to ensure a cooperative effort, a valid model with realistic kinds of growth patterns within resource and transportation constraints. This collaborative exercise will lead to engaging with communities to determine the most appropriate future growth in mutual agreements. Check information and progress on the updated website at www.community2050.org.

TIPS FROM THE INSPECTORS

Building It Differently Than the Approved Plan

If you want to see if the inspector can raise his eyebrows and sigh at the same time, just build part of your project differently than is shown on the approved set of plans. When the inspector asks if you have revised details and/or plans to match the “as-constructed” condition, say “NO” and watch what happens.

To avoid the predictable response and the ensuing delay to the project when changes are made during construction, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- ◆ Engineered details can be changed without an engineered revision only if the change is unquestionably better than the design, i. e. thicker structural panels, larger members, bigger or more fasteners, more than the minimum dimension, etc., AND it is the inspector who must decide if it meets that criteria.
- ◆ Provide the wet-stamped, engineered revision reflecting the “as-constructed” condition to the inspector as the inspection begins, and you may see his eyebrows raise, but there shouldn’t be an accompanying sigh.
- ◆ Changes to the use of spaces, additional plumbing fixtures, added square footage, stairs not shown on the approved plan, different mechanical equipment than itemized in the energy calculations, etc., will usually require a revision with review and approval by County planners and/or plan checkers. You might as well plan on it or talk to the inspector about it in advance.

Update—Secondary Dwelling Design Competition

The County of San Luis Obispo Planning and Building Department, together with the Central Coast American Institute of Architects, several structural engineering firms, and the Workforce Housing Coalition supporters held the Secondary Dwelling Design Competition to promote more affordable housing opportunities in the unincorporated county. Interested local architects submitted plans in March and 29 different plans were received, which is a remarkable response! This competition will culminate in stock plans being available this summer to homeowners in the unincorporated areas of the county free of charge except for duplicating costs.

A diverse group of 5 judges chose 10 winning stock plans. Congratulations to the following architects or architecture firms for designing the winning stock plans: Bryce Engstrom, Architect; Caron Architecture; Craig Smith, Architect; LGA; R2L Architects; and San Luis Sustainability Group. The County would also like to thank and recognize the following architects for participating in the competition: Duke Johnson, Architect; James Maul, Architect; Jeff Schneiderei Architects; M:OME; and Steven Soenke, Architect. All of the submittals that the County received were creative, high quality designs making it difficult for the judges to choose only 10 plans! All participating architects and engineers will be recognized in an awards ceremony in June following the competition.



How To Grow An Oak Tree

by John McKenzie

The county has several different types of oak trees (most common are coast live, blue and valley), each having slightly different soil, moisture and climate requirements. The deciduous valley and blue oaks do best inland, with valley oaks preferring deeper soils. Coast live are the most common and widespread species.

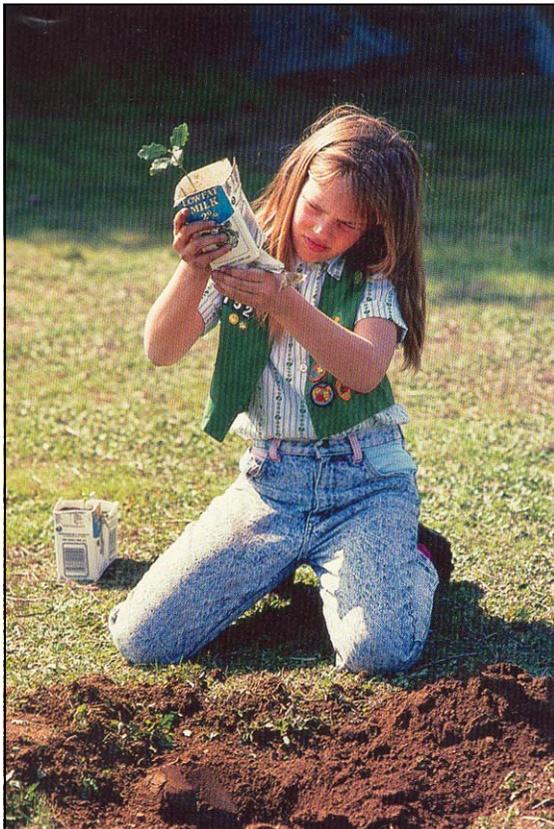
Do I plant acorns or seedlings?

While acorns are cheaper and easier to plant, success rates can be less than a properly planted seedling, especially if acorn-eating rodents exist (ground squirrels and deer mice), or if acorns are not planted at the proper time of year (immediately after first good rain). If you are collecting and storing the acorns, the best time to collect acorns is early fall when some have already fallen and are just starting to turn from green to brown. Also, acorns picked from trees are better than taken from the ground. When storing, remove all caps, place acorns in plastic bag and immediately refrigerate (for up to a month). If acorns are picked from the ground, put them in a bucket of water and discard the “floaters”. Let them dry for a half hour and place into a bag and refrigerate (check for mold and wipe off). If germination begins (common for blue oaks), plant acorns within three weeks. Plant the acorn on its

Do I plant acorns or seedlings?

side about a half to one inch below the surface (if germination has started, plant root end down), and two inches if heavy rodent activity is present.

When seedlings are used, root development is key. Long-sleeved containers are best to avoid root-bound or root-stunted stock, and, for one-gallon containers, seedlings should be less than one year old. Native stock propagated from local acorns is more likely to succeed than acorns propagated from another area and are usually available at local native plant nurseries in the county. Seedlings should be planted between December and February. Dig the hole at least half larger than the container. Back fill around seedling so the top of the container soil is level with native soil. Add a trowel’s worth of soil or leaf litter collected from a nearby oak. This will contain beneficial microorganisms (mycorrhizal fungi) that attach to the seedling’s roots. Gently tamp soil down to remove air pockets. Transplanted seedlings should be watered heavily. Avoid planting near heavy rodent burrowing activities. The use of wire caging or enclosures protecting the leaves and/or roots from wildlife will improve the success rate. Weeds should be removed three to four feet around the seedling. Providing a three to four inch thick mulch in the weeded area around the seedling will effectively reduce competition from weeds.



Where do I plant?

Planting location is key to long-term success. Planting near, but outside of, an existing oak tree canopy is ideal. For inland areas, blue and coast live oaks prefer areas with greater moisture (e.g., north facing slopes, intermittent watercourses or natural drainages). Avoid straight rows or even spacing to retain a natural look. Each planting “spot” could contain several acorns or seedlings (when seedlings are clustered, they should be spaced at least 15 feet apart). For acorns, placing a flag or other identifier is helpful to find the planting spot for future maintenance. While natural densities can vary, on average, there should be no more than 40 “spots” per acre.

Where do I plant?

How do I keep my oak alive?

Each planting spot should be maintained as follows: spring/fall watering (first two years only); twice a year weeding/ mulching, and repair of caging/ enclosures. Application of these measures will go a long way to retain the majestic natural character the county is known for, keep the wildlife around, and increase the value of your property.

How do I keep my oak alive?

Service Improvements for Certificates of Compliance

by John Hofschroer

All parcels of land in our County were not created equal! Parcels have been subdivided and sold in our county since the early 1800's. Over the years, the number of State and local subdivision laws has increased dramatically as the public demanded more regulation of real estate practices. While most of our parcels were created legally, others were sold without the appropriate recorded documents and maps. These parcels become problems for owners because

they may have difficulty getting title insurance, real estate loans, and building permits. A property owner may ask the County to review and acknowledge that the parcel was legally created. When proper deed verification or other evidence is submitted, the County may record a "Certificate of Compliance".

A cumbersome task in preparing Certificates of Compliance was rewriting their sometimes-lengthy legal descriptions. Many of our requests for Cer-

tificates of Compliance come from professional consultants who are knowledgeable in reading, interpreting and writing legal descriptions. We proposed to allow them to prepare the forms themselves, saving time for staff and costs for the applicants. Acceptance of this change by consultants appears to be good, and the process seems to be working well. For more information, contact Jo Manson, Information Services Group, at jmanson@co.slo.ca.us.

Ahwahnee Principles — Before There Was Smart Growth

In 1991, the Local Government Commission brought together a group of architects who were leaders in developing new notions of land use planning. These men and women were asked to develop a set of community principles that would be useful to local elected officials and provide a vision for an alternative to urban sprawl. The principles were presented in the fall of 1991 to about 100 local elected officials at a conference at the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite. The Ahwahnee Principles laid the foundation for the Smart Growth Movement.



Community Principles

1. All planning should be in the form of complete and integrated communities containing housing, shops, work places, schools, parks and civic facilities essential to the daily life of the residents.
2. Community size should be designed so that housing, jobs, daily needs and other activities are within easy walking distance of each other.
3. As many activities as possible should be located within easy walking distance of transit stops.
4. A community should contain a diversity of housing types to enable citizens from a wide range of economic levels and age groups to live within its boundaries.
5. Businesses within the community should provide a range of job types for the community's residents.
6. The location and character of the community should be consistent with a larger transit network.
7. The community should have a center focus that combines commercial, civic, cultural and recreational uses.
8. The community should contain an ample supply of specialized open space in the form of squares, greens and parks whose frequent use is encouraged through placement and design.
9. Public spaces should be designed to encourage the attention and presence of people at all hours of the day and night.
10. Each community or cluster of communities should have a well-defined edge, such as agricultural greenbelts or wildlife corridors, permanently protected from development.
11. Streets, pedestrian paths and bike paths should contribute to a system of fully-connected and interesting routes to all destinations. Their design should encourage pedestrian and bicycle use by being small and spatially defined by buildings, trees and lighting and by discouraging high speed traffic.
12. Wherever possible, the natural terrain, drainage and vegetation of the community should be preserved with superior examples contained within parks or greenbelts.
13. The community design should help conserve resources and minimize waste.
14. Communities should provide for the efficient use of water through the use of natural drainage, drought tolerant landscaping and recycling.
15. The street orientation, the placement of buildings and the use of shading should contribute to the energy efficiency of the community.

Regional Principles

1. The regional land-use planning structure should be integrated within a larger transportation network built around transit rather than freeways.
2. Regions should be bounded by and provide a continuous system of greenbelt/wildlife corridors to be determined by natural conditions.
3. Regional institutions and services (government, stadiums, museums, etc.) should be located in the urban core.
4. Materials and methods of construction should be specific to the region, exhibiting a continuity of history and culture and compatibility with the climate to encourage the development of local character and community identity.

Implementation Principles

1. The general plan should be updated to incorporate the above principles.
2. Rather than allowing developer-initiated, piecemeal development, local governments should take charge of the planning process. General plans should designate where new growth, infill or redevelopment will be allowed to occur.
3. Prior to any development, a specific plan should be prepared based on these planning principles.
4. Plans should be developed through an open process and participants in the process should be provided visual models of all planning proposals.

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Upcoming Events...

- May 2007** Bike Month—over 15 bike-related events, for info www.rideshare.org
- May 5th** Waterfest '07 — for more info contact Kaila Dettman 544-9096
- May 8th** BOS hearing to allocate \$3.6 million in federal grants
- May 17th** Homeless Assistance Resource Fair, 801 Grand Ave. from 9:00 — 2:00
- June 2007** Awards Ceremony — Secondary Design Competition, for more info 781-5113
- July 11-13** Coastal Commission Meeting—Embassy Suites, 333 Madonna Road, SLO

Newsletter brought
to you by the
Communications
Team of the
Department of
Planning and
Building

Please submit ideas for
the next issue to
Jennifer Jimenez
jjimenez@co.slo.ca.us

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receive this newsletter
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“newsletter” in the
subject line.*

Did you know....

The San Luis Obispo Mission was founded in September 1772 by Father Junipero Serra. It was named after St. Louis, Bishop of Toulouse, France. A grist mill was built in 1798. The present building was built in 1793-1794. The front portico was added in 1794, torn down in 1877 and restored in 1933. In 1805 a hospital was built and also a second grist mill and the population of indians at the mission was 961. Mission bells arrived from Lima, Peru cast by Manuel Vargas in 1820. The Hearst Foundation funded an addition to the annex in 1948. The Mission continues to be recognized as the center of the City of San Luis Obispo, with the dedication of Mission Plaza in 1970. The Mission's web page went online in 1998. As of 2003, the parish serves 2,200 families with a variety of ministries.



Bike Month is a San Luis Obispo County and national celebration of human-powered vehicle transportation. It encourages people of all ages and abilities to ride bicycles to their destinations instead of driving. This year's Bike Month theme is “Shift Gears.” May is the time to shift away from air pollution and traffic and shift into a healthy lifestyle.

SHIFT GEARS



BIKE MONTH 2007 • SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

SLO Regional Rideshare encourages individuals to shift from driving alone to joining the “Commuter Bike Challenge” during May.



Beginning April 4, team captains can register their teams consisting of 4-10 people. The team challenge is an exciting way to encourage more people to shift from driving to cycling—which keeps our roadways clear, our air clean and is an effective way to reduce global warming. Each day in May that a team member cycles to work, to the store or even to the gym, they'll log on to www.rideshare.org to record their miles and trips.

Last year close to 40 executives throughout the county took the Executive Commuter Bike Challenge. These executives rode once during Bike Week. “This year we are looking to have over 50 executives join a team,” stated Lisa Quinn, Program Coordinator for SLO Regional Rideshare. Executives who sign the commitment to be a part of a team will be recognized in the Tribune on Sunday, April 29th. All executives and public officials will be invited to the Shifter Mixer on May 9th at Firestone Ales in Paso Robles. This is a great opportunity to meet other like-minded executives who find cycling to work the best part of their day. So come on—join in!

